



Governor Terry E. Branstad
Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds
San Wong, Director

Iowa Commission on the Status of African Americans

2nd Quarter Meeting Minutes

December 4, 2015

Evelyn K. Davis Center for Working Families

800 University Avenue, Room 128

Des Moines, Iowa 50314

Call to order at 1:12 pm by Chairperson Clair Rudison

Welcome/Introductions:

Present: Clair Rudison, Rita Davenport, Kimberly Wayne, Ken Morris, Bryan Burton (via teleconference), San Wong, Ex-officio

Absent: Madai Taylor, Lynn Sutton

Staff: Kim Cheeks, Monica Stone

Visitors:

Genae Ewing

Doyle Landry – Positive Vision

Joshua Barr, Des Moines Human and Civil Rights Commission

Ahmadu Baba – Professor Grand View University, Criminal Justice Department

Nancy Mwiroti

Comfort Dondo

Veronica Wines

Approve Minutes:

Commissioner Burton motioned to approve minutes of August 7, 2015 meeting as written, Commissioner Morris second, approved unanimously.

Financial Report:

Stone reported an offer has been made to one of the candidates for the Latino Affairs Executive Officer position. There was discussion on why the Status of African Americans and Latino Affairs are under one umbrella, the similarities and differences between cultures. Director Wong explained the structure of all offices in the Community Advocacy and Services are under one umbrella, she created the clusters so that each office would have the budget for Status of African-Americans pretty much covers staff salaries. She further stated that when the department was reorganized, all the CAS office budgets were

combined into one. One thing to note, the budget is appropriated, approximately 1 million for the entire division not just one office. She suggested think about in terms of division then office. Many questions were raised about the about the office of African Americans and Latino Affairs paired together. It was brought up the need for them to be separated because the issues are not the same – concerned that structure is not working and the need to work with the African immigrant communities.

Wayne – Does end of year surplus get rolled over to next fiscal year?

Stone – Explained that half of the surplus is moved to training and technology funds and the other half to the State general fund.

Wayne – What happens to the money from vacant positions?

Stone – Answered she will talk more about it in the CAS Strategic Plan report. Funds can be used in other areas.

Director Wong – Replied it's easier to use when it is at beginning of the fiscal year than at the end because have to use funds quickly.

Some concerns were raised from members of the African community; is there a platform for them to present and address issues, how do they get empowered, what can ICSAA do to assist them?

Chair Rudison talked about the relationship with incarceration in Iowa for blacks and the need for criminal justice and sentencing reform.

Public Comment:

Comfort Dondo – visitor – told her background and the work she has done regarding African immigrant issues in another state. She explained that although there are some similarities, there are some differences for immigrants:

- Financial literacy
- Teenage pregnancy
- Trauma
- HIV/AIDS
- Mental health
- Culture shock
- Female genital mutilation.

Wayne – questioned if the issues are the same in Iowa? She proposed if they could list top 3-5 issues the commission could assist and she would compile a resource list to serve their needs.

Doyle Landry – visitor – asked about DHR FY2017 budget? He expressed constituents do not know the processes or hierarchy of DHR/CAS division. He wanted to know when the administrator of the Status of African Americans office would be reinstated, because people feel like they are not being heard due to the internal structure of the CAS division.

Director Wong explained Status of African Americans is an office within CAS division, and the legislature allocates funds to CAS division not the individual offices.

Landry – followed with his concern of the need to fund for executive officer in Status of African Americans office.

Many views and concerns were expressed about the clusters in the division and how it wasn't serving the needs of African Americans/blacks in the state.

Director Wong – clarified that she advocates for funding the entire Department of Human Rights in which she requests money on behalf of all the constituents. She furthered when she came the division was divided into offices. The budget request for fiscal year 2017 was status quo. The Governor makes a recommendation to legislature and they make the decision on how much department will receive for the fiscal year. She mentioned the cluster system for CAS was created to address the internal staffing issue so that all work will be covered for the offices and commissions.

Dondo – recommended an African be given a seat at the table of the commission. She volunteered to help the office serve the needs of the community.

Landry – felt the meeting with Director Wong and Governor did not reflect the needs and wants of the African American/African communities. He feels people leave Iowa because of systemic oppression and the public is not being heard by the administration.

Rudison proposed since there had been great discussion on the needs of Africans and need for collaboration in public comment, to omit the agenda item under "New Business", Collaboration with African Leadership.

Reports:

Director:

Wong reported the 2015 DHR Annual Report and FY2016 budget were presented and approved by the DHR Board.

Division:

Stone discussed that CAS has been engaged in strategic planning. The four strategies and measures the division decided upon are; how to increase language and communication access, increase civic engagement and participation, enhance engagement with the DHR in our communities, and improve educational and leadership connection with youth. The goal is to make Iowa equal, just, accessible, and inclusive. She expounded more on the initiative and how monies available from the open position could be used to reach the goals, such as outreach.

Office:

Cheeks submitted a written report.

Commissioner Reports:

Chair Rudison stressed the need for written reports to be submitted from each commissioner.

Old Business:**1. DHR Board Report:**

Rudison added to Director Wongs' board meeting report, update on DHR website, status quo budget, and 2015 DHR Annual Report.

New business:

1. Discussion on Legislation – legislative session starts in January 2016, a list of suggested legislation was passed out to the commission to review and/or support. No recommendations were made on how to move or support any items.

2. Collaboration with African Leadership – addressed in agenda in public comments.

Next meeting:

Chair Rudison will work with Cheeks to select a date for the next meeting.

Adjourn at 3:00 pm.

Move to adjourn by Wayne, second by Rudison, approved unanimously.